



18th Battalion Association

Windsor and Detroit Branch

MEMORIES

As Christmas time approaches, do you ever think of the first Christmas Day we spent in Flanders? Two of our Companies were in the front line, the M & N trenches, while the other two Companies were in reserve at Ridgewood and Veerstraat which were about a half mile apart. Both places were less than a mile from the front line.

On Christmas Day, Jimmie Cork and I got up early as planned, dressed, and left the Dugout quietly. When we got outside, we found the day to be bright and clear, with very little wind. It was still chilly. We both noticed there was no shelling and very little rifle fire which was unusual. We then started walking along the Ridgewood road, and when we came to the Dickebush swamp, we noticed it was covered by a low lying fog which gave it a white appearance and made it look much larger than it was. We walked to the junction of Dickebush, but did not cross, as there was an M.P. on duty directing traffic. We then started back and noticed that some of the camp were starting to come to life. When we got back to Ridgewood, old Davy Campbell and Bert Silk, the Company cooks, were just starting breakfast. We wished them both a Merry Christmas, and Davy wanted to know if we had been out all night.

After breakfast, most of us washed and shaved and got cleaned up. We visited around the camp as there was no place else to go. After dinner, we played an awful lot of cribbage, and just before dusk, we heard the members of the British Battery, whose gun emplacements were on our left, singing Christmas Carols. It was the only Christmas music we heard. After supper, a group of us went over to the "Y" at Veerstraat, where we bought some chocolate, cigarettes, cookies, and other things we needed. We then talked with some of the fellows who we knew that were in the other Company. About nine o'clock we decided to go over and visit Jack Richardson, who was then acting as C.S.M. Jack was a member of our Platoon from the beginning. He was glad to see us and made some tea. We then opened some of the cookies we had just bought, and sat gabbing for a while.

Near midnight, some one suggested we should return, so we decided to go back by the La Brasserie. This road was usually under fire (Sergt. Spooner was killed there) but tonight both sides were honouring an unofficial cease-fire.

As we passed the La Brasserie, there were three ambulances taking out the sick and the wounded. When we got back to the dugout there was some more gabbing until someone snuffed out the candle.

As I lay in the darkness, I knew that some of the others were wondering, as I was, how many more Christmas Days we would spend away from home.

It was a long, long day and very dull.